



# Conserve O Gram

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## Museum Storage Cabinets

Over the years museums have been challenged to find means of storing collections that will provide for their security and proper environment and act as barriers against biological infestation while ensuring easy accessibility. Commercially available or custom-built racks and cabinets, glass cases, steel and wooden shelving, and specialized vaults all have been used to house museum objects. Many museums, as well as the National Park Service, recognize the advantages of using specialized museum storage cabinets for preservation of collections.

By properly housing collections in specialized museum storage cabinets, most detrimental influences can be counteracted. Cabinets have these advantages:

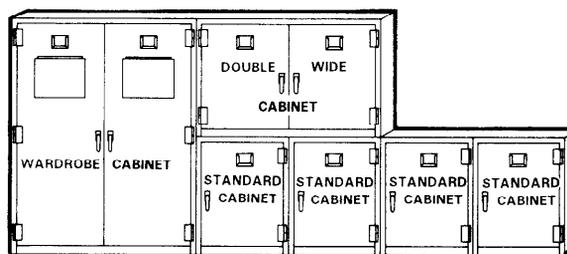
- Exposure to visible light and ultraviolet radiation can be eliminated.
- Security against theft is enhanced by doors that are equipped with a locking mechanism.
- A microenvironment is created inside the cabinet. The gasket around the door jamb restricts air flow, thereby significantly reducing dust, pollutants, and changing levels of relative humidity and temperature. The gasket also prevents insects and rodents from entering the unit.

The NPS *Museum Handbook*, Part I (Rev 9/90), Chapter 7, provides further information on museum collection storage. There are a variety of sources for museum storage cabinets. Refer to NPS *Tools of the Trade* for a listing of the types and sources of museum storage equipment. Manufacturers' catalogs are excellent guides to the variety of cabinets available and how they

may be used. The NPS Curatorial Services Division can provide source information for acquiring catalogs.

### *The Modular System*

The NPS has developed a modular system of three primary cabinets for housing museum collections. The three types are illustrated and described below.



### **Standard Museum Cabinet**

Dimensions:  
29"w x 32"d x 36-7/8"h

Originally developed as a geology-paleontology cabinet, the standard cabinet has become the National Park Service's primary storage container. The heavy duty construction allows for storage of heavier artifacts. It is also suitable for storing nearly all small objects, as well as smaller textile and ethnographic materials. The size of the artifact or specimen to be stored is limited only by the 50 pound maximum load per drawer, the vertical space between drawers, and the dimensions of the drawer (24-15/16" wide x 30" deep). The

maximum number of drawers per cabinet is sixteen, although a normal complement is ten drawers.

### Doublewide Museum Cabinet

Dimensions:  
58"w x 32"d x 36-7/8"h

This cabinet is twice the width of a standard museum cabinet but has the same depth and height. It is used for the storage of lighter objects with larger dimensions, such as study skins, baskets, and large textiles. The wider drawer is suitable for flat storage of fragile textiles that are too delicate to be rolled or hung on padded hangers. Like the standard cabinet, the doublewide cabinet can hold sixteen drawers but the usual complement is ten drawers.

### Wardrobe Cabinet

Dimensions:  
58"w x 32"d x 78"h

The wardrobe cabinet has the same footprint as a doublewide cabinet or two standard cabinets placed side by side. The interior is open. The cabinet was designed originally with a closet hanger rod and hat shelf to store garments on padded hangers, but it is adaptable for storing a variety of objects on assemblies designed by the manufacturers. These assemblies include full- and half-width drawers, vertical slots, fixed shelves, and fixed and pull-out rolled storage rods.

One of the advantages to using a modular system of storage cabinets is that their uniform size simplifies storage space organization and arrangement. The ability to stack cabinets allows a more efficient use of vertical space. However, there are a few guidelines to follow when stacking cabinets. Both standard and doublewide cabinets can be stacked, but no more than two high. Two standard cabinets are strong enough to support one doublewide cabinet, but a doublewide cabinet cannot support two

standard cabinets. Wardrobe cabinets are full-height cabinets (over six feet) and cannot be stacked.

Standard cabinets allow for the use of specialized materials to aid in storing objects. For example, the NPS has designed archival-quality specimen trays that are modular in size and shape and fit compactly and exactly within a standard drawer. NPS has also developed a polyethylene foam drawer pad that fits into the bottom of the drawer and provides a nonskid and nonreactive surface for both the specimen trays and artifacts too large for the trays.

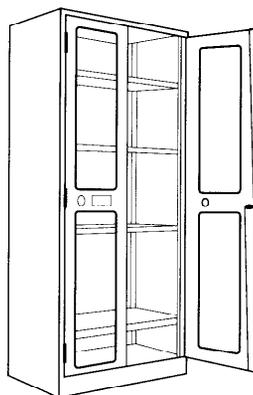
### Additional Cabinet Options

In addition to the three cabinets in the modular system, other types of museum cabinets are intended for particular collections or for special functions.

### Visual Storage Case

Dimensions:  
36-3/8"w x 16-1/4"d x 84"h (small)  
36-3/8"w x 22-1/4"d x 84"h (medium)  
48-3/8"w x 22-1/2"d x 84"h (large)

This cabinet allows for the visual accessibility of objects while also providing for safe storage.



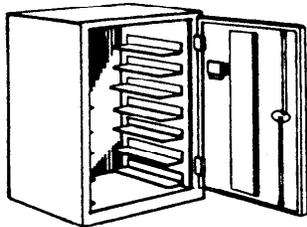
The cabinet is equipped with lift-off, swinging double doors and a locking handle. Six adjustable shelves are standard with the cabinet. The four viewing panels in the doors may be made of either ultraviolet (UV) light filtering Plexiglas® or safety glass. A cabinet with

UV-filtering Plexiglas should be used when storing light-sensitive objects, such as baskets.

**Entomology Cabinet**

Dimensions:  
 23-3/16"w x 20-1/3"d x 42-3/4"h (counter height)  
 23-3/16"w x 20-1/3"d x 84-1/8"h (full height)

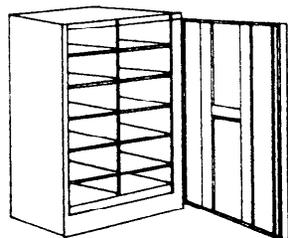
The 42-3/4"-high steel unit has 12 drawers on glides. The 84-1/8"-high steel unit has 24 drawers on glides. Both have a gasketed door, a locking door handle, and a label holder on the door. Both use Cornell-style drawers, which hold insect pinning trays in a system of modular sizes.



**Herbarium Cabinet**

Dimensions:  
 25-5/32"w x 18-25/32"d x 40"h (counter height)  
 25-5/32"w x 28-25/32"d x 84-1/8"h (full height)

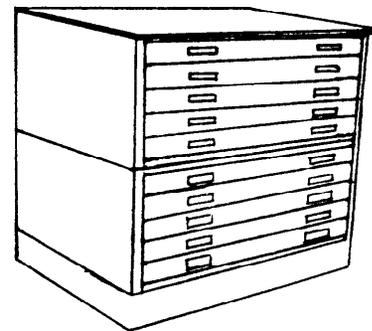
This steel cabinet has compartments that are designed to hold mounted herbarium specimens enclosed in herbarium folders. The 40"-high cabinet has 12 compartments. The 84-1/8"-high cabinet has 26 compartments. The single door has a gasket, a locking handle, and a label holder.



**Map Cabinet**

Dimensions: (height varies)  
 40-3/4"w x 28-7/16"d (small)  
 46-3/4"w x 35-7/16"d (medium)  
 53-3/4"w x 41-7/16"d (large)

The steel map cabinet has large, flat storage drawers and can be obtained through the Federal Supply Schedule or from commercial vendors. It is available in three sizes, but the largest size is generally recommended. The cabinet comes in multiples of five-drawer sections, each section measuring 15-3/8" high. The full height of a map cabinet varies according to the number of 5-drawer sections that are stacked upon each other. Experience has shown counter height, usually two stacked sections, to be the most workable. A base and a top complete the unit. The map cabinet is used for storing large historic maps, prints, and documents. For proper protection, the objects are placed in acid-free map folders before storing in the cabinet. Blueprints should be stored separately from other collection objects because of their tendency to off-gas which can be harmful to other materials.



Donald R. Cumberland, Jr.  
 Museum Specialist  
 Curatorial Services Division  
 National Park Service  
 Harpers Ferry, West Virginia 25425

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